

**Text:** [Matthew 10:40-42 \(CEB\)](#)

**Date:** June 28, 2026

**Title:** "It's the Little Things"

**Theme:** It's the little things that have the power to change everything.

## 1

In 1987, Princess Diana did something completely unexpected  
Something that seemed a small gesture at the time  
But became a turning point in the public perception of AIDS

For those who didn't live through it  
It's really hard to convey the fear and misinformation surrounding  
the early days of HIV/AIDS  
Because many of the first victims were gay men, there was a  
terrible stigma associated with the disease

Diana was invited to dedicate the UK's first purpose-built unit to  
care for AIDS patients

On the appointed day, she did the things the Princess of Wales  
was expected to do:

walk around admiring the space, media in tow  
talking with doctors and nurses involved in the project,  
meeting patients

Except in this case, the majority of patients were unwilling to  
appear in photos or video because of the way they'd been  
treated by a fearmongering press

But one patient – a man who, in the words of one of the nurses  
working that day, was actively dying – he agreed to a photo<sup>1</sup>  
That picture, of Diana sitting across from him without a mask, and  
shaking his hand WITHOUT GLOVES –

That one photo helped to reduce fear and stigma  
Helped people to understand the truth about AIDS more  
powerfully than any public health campaign ever could

## 2

Sometimes it's the little things that matter most  
We live in a climate of fear  
Surrounded by division

On every news story on social media  
I tell myself constantly...don't read the comments  
And then I do  
And I find racism, homophobia, xenophobia on full display  
I'm often reminded of a line in the *Lord of the Rings* movies,  
"What can [one] do against such reckless hate?"<sup>2</sup>

I have this conversation all the time  
About how helpless people feel  
And I feel it too  
The weight of wondering how the world gets any better

Then I remember something like Princess Diana visiting AIDS  
patients and choosing to shake their hands  
That one small act made a huge difference

## 3

After last week's challenging scripture,  
you might be surprised to hear the way Matthew chapter 10 ends  
– with these gentle words  
Gone is all the harshness of the earlier part of the chapter

Now all we have is a simple invitation from Jesus:  
If you receive me, it's like you're receiving the one who sent me  
If you receive a prophet, you'll be rewarded like a prophet  
If you receive a righteous person, you'll be rewarded like a  
righteous person

And if you even give a cup of cold water to these little ones  
because they are my disciples, you will be rewarded

This theme of receiving Jesus as a guest is found in other places  
in Matthew's gospel

Do you remember the parable of the sheep and the goats from  
Matthew 25?

It's the same idea – offering care to those in need of care  
Is like offering a blessing to Jesus himself

Now, the context here is a little different

Remember, last week we said Matthew 10 is where Jesus  
blesses and prepares the 12 disciples to go about his  
ministry

After warning the disciples that they were likely to face resistance  
He offered them hope that they would also find welcome  
By putting the ideas of resistance and welcome together,  
his words become a reminder not to take that welcome for  
granted

That even a cup of something cold to drink  
Is worth celebrating and giving thanks for

Because serving those who serve  
Is another way we take part in Jesus' mission  
And it carries its own blessing

#### **4A**

This week, some of our young people, along with a few adult  
volunteers, will be at Christian Outreach Project  
Repairing homes for people in need in northwest New Jersey

Some of my most precious memories from mission trips  
Are of the meals lovingly prepared by members of churches who  
want nothing more than an opportunity to serve those who  
serve

People showing up early  
Setting up to feed 100+ people in a church fellowship hall  
Sweating profusely in a kitchen with no air conditioning

But still dishing out heaping plates of everything good – corn on  
the cob, watermelon, pasta salad, pulled pork sandwiches  
Sometimes even steak!

>>If Jesus says a cup of cold water offered to a disciple will be  
rewarded,  
I can't help but think: how much more will these saints be  
rewarded for feeding hungry kids some barbeque!

## **4B**

I find Jesus' words encouraging when it feels like there's not  
much I can do to help  
Because, at best, every one of us can be deeply engaged in one  
or two dimensions of Jesus' mission that really matter to us  
Maybe for you, that's evangelism  
Maybe it's child poverty, maybe that's justice for immigrants,  
maybe that's anti-racism work

We'll be the ones Jesus is sending out when it comes to those  
one or two things we're called to  
We'll be the ones parched after working or marching out in the  
heat of the day  
The ones looking for something cool to drink

But when it comes to most other things, we're going to be the  
ones handing out the cold water  
And that's ok

>>Not everyone can run the race  
Someone needs to be there to hand out the Gatorade  
That's an important job, too

It may strike us as odd for Jesus to say  
"The one who receives a prophet will receive a prophet's reward"  
I mean, shouldn't the prophet get something a little better?

Jesus says, no  
>>Because the prophets can't do the work unless people are  
watching out for them

All through the Bible, there are examples of brave and generous  
souls who assist those God calls –  
In ways big and small

Elijah is famously fed by the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17  
This was one of my favorite stories as a child  
God sends the prophet to her house just as her food is about to  
run out  
But even as she wonders how she's going to provide for herself  
and her son, she's generous enough to share some of what  
she has with Elijah  
And the miracle is that her flour and oil don't run out

## 5

At the bottom line, the way we heal the world is by doing the next  
kind thing we have the opportunity to do  
That's how we participate in the mission and ministry of Jesus

It is easy to believe that what we have to offer is so small that it  
couldn't possibly matter

>>But I think we'd be surprised if we took time to reflect on the  
small gestures that made the biggest difference in our lives

Many of us have heard the saying:

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did,  
but they will never forget how you made them feel"<sup>3</sup>

I think that's the truth Jesus illustrates with the image of the cup of  
cold water

It isn't the size of the gesture

It's the care behind it that matters – and people see it

Throughout my life, I've found that to be true

I don't remember exactly what my second grade teacher – Miss  
Weyandt – taught me

But I do remember that she was someone I absolutely adored

I can't say *exactly* what she did that was so special

Except that she helped a little boy who was very anxious at  
school feel supported and cared for

The gestures don't have to be grand to make an impression

They just need to be thoughtful and consistent

Sometimes we use the smallness of a gesture as an excuse NOT  
to do something

It's just a *little* thing, therefore it doesn't matter

Jesus turns that understanding completely on its head

So – if you want to be part of Jesus' mission to transform the  
world

Don't worry about grand gestures

Just do the next kind thing you have the opportunity to do

This week, if you're the one running the race  
Thank the person who offers you Gatorade  
Don't take it for granted

And if you're the one on the sidelines  
Remember what Jesus says about handing someone a cup of  
cold water  
That you'll find a blessing in it  
And so will they

>>It's the *little* things that have the power to change *everything*  
Don't ever forget that

Amen.

**By Joe Monahan, Medford UMC, Medford NJ**

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<sup>1</sup> This is a great short BBC video about that day: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/magazine-39490507>

<sup>2</sup> The quote is from King Theoden of Rohan, at the moment when Helm's Deep seems lost:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2m2-8Co8YRs>

<sup>3</sup> I looked into the attribution of this quote – often listed as Maya Angelou. It most likely is not from her:  
<https://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/04/06/they-feel/>.